

**Reviews: 1. Chris Alden and Sergio Chichava (eds.): China and Mozambique: from comrades to capitalists; 2. Giles Mohan, Ben Lampert, May Tan-Mullins and Daphne Chang: Chinese Migrants and Africa's Development: New Imperialists or Agents of Change?**

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## Book Reviews

Chris Alden and Sergio Chichava (eds) (2014), *China and Mozambique: From Comrades to Capitalists*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, ISBN 9781920196943, 240 pp.

Giles Mohan, Ben Lampert, May Tan-Mullins and Daphne Chang (2014), *Chinese Migrants and Africa's Development: New Imperialists or Agents of Change?*, London: Zed Books, ISBN 9781780329178, 192 pp.

For decades, China's intensified relations with Africa have counted among the continent's most significant developments; China is now Africa's top trading partner and one of its main sources of foreign direct investment. This phenomenon has inspired many analyses and a plethora of publications on "China–Africa". Among the works published on this subject in 2014, these two books – the first tackling the very specific case of Mozambique and the second examining individual Chinese migrants – have attracted our attention. Their respective subtitles – "From Comrades to Capitalists" and "New Imperialists or Agents of Change?" – make use of antonyms, as if the Chinese state and Chinese individuals exhibit only two behavioural extremes, of good and evil, good guys and bad guys. The subtitles convey the current dichotomous take on Chinese policies regarding Africa – that China respects its African interlocutors and that it is practising a new form of imperialism.

These two works present two distinct ways of broaching the phenomenon of China in Africa. The first book presents a classical analysis of the Chinese presence in terms of its principal economic sectors and also discusses its "win-win" policy in the seldom-studied case of war-torn Mozambique, while the second book seeks to understand how this presence affects individual migrants in the context of changing mobilities and global influences.

Like many editions that focus on China in Africa, the multi-author volume edited by Chris Alden and Sergio Chichava begins with an overview of the Chinese presence in Africa. A brief review of works published on the subject since the early 2000s is followed by a quick report of China's opening to forms of market capitalism and the observation that China has become one of Africa's most important commercial partners. Although African resources exported to China still dominate the balance of trade, China is well established on the continent, where it is more or less harmonizing its discourse with its interests whilst also looking out for the

interests of its partners. China should be able to maintain this powerful position for the long term in a security environment that favours business, despite the challenges it faces due to the re-awakening of Western powers' interests in Africa and those that crop up in conjunction with its adherence to the policy of non-interference in African domestic affairs. To safeguard its strategic positions on the continent in terms of access to resources, China must also invest in key sectors.

The first chapter of this collective work – summed up by the phrase “Comrades to Capitalists” – concerns China’s relations with Mozambique, the latter having been the former’s privileged partner since the FRELIMO era in the 1960s. The partnership is best illustrated by the extent to which Mozambique has profited from being China’s gateway to, and hub from which to branch out to, landlocked countries in Southern Africa in recent years.

The volume deals with Southern Africa in addition to Angola, Nigeria, Sudan and the DRC, focusing on the interests of those countries’ leaders in the Asian giant. It bears repeating that the authors emphasize the Chinese discourse regarding Africa – respect for African sovereignty, political equality, solidarity with African interests and Chinese–African relations from the Ming Dynasty – which helps to promote agreement on bilateral projects (xiv). Yet the authors also touch upon the complexity of these relations, as demonstrated by the reactions of local populations. China admits that not all economic actors have been able to respect the terms of its win-win policy. The Chinese government cannot control all the small Chinese enterprises in Africa (xv).

The authors then cover the usual issues in ten separate chapters, pointing out the complexity of China’s presence given its diverse (economic, financial and agricultural) investments. They use an ethnographic approach to examine the large enterprises and small Chinese entrepreneurs. One chapter focuses on the role of Chinese migration to Africa and the status of the migrants, who are generally poor. They describe the problems faced by the many Chinese who are trying to survive in under-capitalized businesses in an environment that is less competitive than that of China (xvi) – problems which the Chinese government could not anticipate.

The focus on Mozambique is particularly interesting. The authors show how this emblematic case could both serve as a model for true South–South cooperation and light a promising new path towards Africa’s future – despite the complexities and contradictions.

In addition to studies on whether African–Chinese relations contribute to the continent’s development or are actually a new form of

imperialism, the authors of *Chinese Migrants and Africa's Development: New Imperialists or Agents of Change?* focus on the Chinese who migrated to Africa unconnected to policies and contracts signed between their country and African states. The authors ponder what brought those Chinese to Africa, examine the consequences of their presence and describe the Chinese migrants' interactions with local Africans. The authors look at the migrants through the prism of development, which they define as "social transformation", as used by Castle in writing about migration and development (2009 and 2010). These studies suggest that the Chinese in Africa do not really mix with local people, something that the authors criticize in the context of some sectors (9).

On one hand, the authors begin with the West's failure to develop Africa, which caused it to open to other – Asian – actors, as well as to Brazil, Russia and some Arab states. On the other hand, the authors use the concept of "migration and development" to study specific Chinese migrants in a certain number of African countries. They elaborate the history and chronology of the migrations along with geopolitical aspects (Chapters 2 and 3). Then they study the migrants' geographic origins and social characteristics, before addressing the context that shapes their conduct towards local African communities.

The authors are well aware of the challenge of their undertaking: They are not dealing with one group of migrants or with homogeneous destinations, and the situation is constantly evolving. They use concepts often neglected in social science, such as cosmopolitanism, conviviality and intersectionality, which they consider more helpful. They also emphasize certain vectors for transformation – such as mobility and the particularly Chinese approach to capitalism – that result from how the Chinese organize businesses. In order to comprehend anxieties and social interactions, the volume further analyses the social organization and resistance of local populations (15).

The authors begin by ideologically deconstructing what they consider *a priori* negative perceptions of China (and of the Chinese) and of Chinese enterprises, which they view as not unrelated to discourse and strategies employed by Western countries to defend their own interests by means of vilifying China. Their thorough knowledge of the literature and their own empirical studies (in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Angola) and their use of specific methods and objectives described in the book's introduction come together to create a pluridisciplinary analysis of day-to-day Chinese–African relations. China is also viewed as displacing globalization's Western bias in order to act with Africa – within the spatial reorganization of global capitalism. The authors make evident

the “multiple types of globalization” that constitute “globalization”. Ultimately, the study, which focuses on Chinese migrants in Africa and their motivations, is about both China *and* Africa because the actors’ interactions are so entwined. It is not possible to describe the multifunctional and multifactorial development of homogeneous groups such as “the Chinese” and/or “the Africans”. The Chinese and African actors’ mobility is central to the social changes and developments.

Each study concludes with its own analytical progressions, regarding the beginnings and social transformations where the Chinese/China present obvious potential for Africa’s social and economic development. The actors’ mobility is key. In any case, beyond semantic issues regarding the nature of these migrants, the definitions in both books of “reorganization” and the “multiple types” of globalization should be revised.

- Laurence Marfaing